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Olive Gaddini Bacigalupi

Interviewed by  
Joseph Vercelli



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Gaddini  
Bacigalupi

Interviewed by Joseph Vercelli

February 1982

Transcription 1994



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## Introduction

Olive Gaddini Bacigalupi was the third child of John and Elizabeth Gaddini. John Gaddini was born in Italy and met his wife in Colma, California, Elizabeth Passalacqua was originally from Missouri. After their marriage in 1879, they moved to the town of Sonoma establishing a bakery, and this is where their daughter Clara was born in 1881. Olive's brother Ernest was born in 1886 and Olive in 1890.

The family purchased the Chiquita Road ranch in the outskirts of Healdsburg in 1883. John Gaddini hired workers to clear the property while he earned the money to pay them by hauling railroad ties with his team of horses at Duncan Mills. Clara moved onto the Chiquita Ranch with her husband, John Auradou before the 1906 Earthquake.

As did a number of families, the Gaddini's had a business in San Francisco and kept an apartment there. Olive went to school in San Francisco even after her father's death in 1904. Mrs. Bacigalupi reminisces about the terrible conditions in San Francisco from the Earthquake and the experiences they went through getting out of the City. She talks about the wineries the family owned in the Healdsburg area and the arson of the family winery at the Chiquita Ranch in 1909.

The last winery the family built still stands on Dry Creek Road (#1960) it has had a long history as a winery, following Gaddini and Auradou ownership, after Prohibition it was the Healdsburg Wine Company and was run until the late 1980's by the Fredson family who sold bulk wine to CK Mondavi Winery. The facility sat vacant for a couple of years, and was purchased in 1994, its future as a winery is uncertain at this time.

Olive married Albert C. Bacigalupi of Santa Rosa and settled in the Proctor Terrace area of the city. Mrs. Bacigalupi passed away in 1987. Her son, Dr. Charles Bacigalupi, is a dentist in Healdsburg. He lives on the outskirts of town in the Russian River Valley. The family has a number of vineyards and is active in wine grape production.

Joseph Vercelli, the interviewer, is widely known in the wine industry, he started in the Northern Sonoma County wine business as Prohibition came to a close. He has a keen interest in the history of the wine industry and has interviewed a number of *Old Timers in Sonoma County*.



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Olive Gaddini Bacigalupi  
with her son Dr. Charles Bacigalupi

Interviewed by Joseph Vercelli  
Healdsburg, California  
February 3, 1982

Transcription by Gail Ryan, Healdsburg      February 1994

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Olive Bacigalupi: I can't talk good anymore, I had a slight stroke and it affected my speech.

Joseph Vercelli: You'll do very well, just relax.

Bacigalupi: I'm 91 years old and I should be dead, and I'm not.

Vercelli: No. Wait I'll tell you a little story.

Bacigalupi: Okay.

Vercelli: The story is this. I'm far from being 90. I just celebrated my 69th birthday—

Bacigalupi: When I was your age I was climbing mountains, swimming in the ocean, I was having a good time.

C. Bacigalupi: That's true.

Vercelli: My ambition in life is to live to be 107, and then shot by a jealous husband.

[Laughter]

Bacigalupi: You know, all the extra years I have, I'll give to you I don't want them. I'm though, but I'm here and I have to stay.

[Checks recorder]

Vercelli: Do you remember many wineries out there?

Bacigalupi: Let me tell you about that.

We lived in San Francisco. And after my father (John Gaddini) died, Clara and her husband (John Auradou, called Jack) and Clement and Elizabeth, her two little children, went up on the ranch. The people that were there, left the ranch. Clara and Jack went up there to live on the ranch.

Vercelli: The people that lived on the ranch were the Corbellis?



- Bacigalupi: Yes. And they (Clara & Jack) went there and lived on the ranch to take care of the ranch and the winery. My father died in 1904 when I was thirteen. My mother (Elizabeth) and I were living in the City, and my brother was running the winery down there. And Jack and Clara were on the ranch. We had this earthquake in 1906. Then this earthquake came we lost everything. There was no insurance on the business in the City, because it was down in the basement, you know how they were. There was no danger of fire down in the cellar. So there was no insurance, it was a total loss. We lost everything in our home, we lost everything! All we had saved was the clothes on our back, we had as many clothes as we could carry.
- Vercelli: Do you remember where you lived?
- Bacigalupi: Yes, we lived on 1000 Montgomery Street.
- Vercelli: Just as you were going up the hill?
- Bacigalupi: Right at the corner, just before you start the hill. And my father's business, you have pictures of that—
- Vercelli: Yes.
- Bacigalupi: —was catty corner like this. The four blocks, Broadway came this way, Montgomery came this way. I lived here and the store was over here, catty corner. Anyway, that was a complete loss, we were wiped out, everything, a total loss. What was left of the horses and the people that owed money to us, the customers, we probably had a good business there, that we had to just gave to the fellow that was helping Ernie (her brother) gave him the whole thing—the horse, buggy, the wagon—he started the business again right there in the very same spot.
- That was when my brother bought that beautiful horse right off the track, a beautiful, beautiful black horse. And he and another fellow, I can't think of his name right now, they drove the horse to Healdsburg and they got as far as Santa Rosa—and Santa Rosa was a small, little town then—he was staying at the St. Rose Hotel, it was the best one at the time. And his horse was in the St. Rose's stables.
- The earthquake came, and Santa Rosa went as flat as a pancake. Everything was lost. Everything was flat. Ernie was buried under the hotel. A big timber fell across his chest. The building was on fire, and when they dug him out of it, his leg, his feet, the bottom of his feet from the windows, were ripped just like hamburger, just all cut to pieces. And his chest was injured, and his lungs were injured from this big timber. They dug down and got him out of there, they had to because the thing was on fire. The fellow that worked in the kitchen was one—I don't know how many were there but he was Chinese. He was there and the fire was getting close to him and he was screaming for people to come and help him. So I can't tell you the story on that because I don't know if they saved him or not. I suppose they did if they could. But they got Ernie out. Then he had to climb over all this wreckage to get his horse out of the stables. And he took and lead the horse over all that wreck. And he said that the horse never picked up a





nail. Isn't that wonderful. He got the horse ready and he drove her up to Healdsburg and he and his horse were the first ones to give Healdsburg the news of the earthquake, because everything was down, all wires were down, no telephone or nothing. And he and his little horse brought the news of Santa Rosa to Healdsburg.

Then they found out that San Francisco was flat. And my brother with those, I'll never forget it, his feet were just like ribbons cut by glass, I don't know how he could ever walk. He had a lot of grit like his father. And he got on the train, and he got as far as Tiburon and he had no way to get to San Francisco it was quarantined, you couldn't go in and you couldn't get out. But it was the same old thing, my family always had a lot of money. Ernie was the boss of the whole thing, now that my father had died. And he had plenty of money and he hired a man with his fishing boat to smuggle him into San Francisco. He had to get his mother and sister out of that City. So he gets in this little boat and I'll tell you where that boat was landed, on one pier only at Fisherman's Wharf. That's where it was. There was one, just one.

C. Bacigalupi: You mean that there was just one pier that didn't go down?

Bacigalupi: Yes, there was only one at that time, at the time of the earthquake. That was no place at all, there was just one pier.

The fellow tied the boat to the pier and then Ernie told the fellow to "Wait for me, until I come back." He went down to where our house was and it did not burn yet, it didn't burn to the last day, this was the second day, you see. And he went and tried to get in and these—

Vercelli: Militia—

Bacigalupi: They had these guns with the blades sticking out—

Vercelli: The bayonets.

Bacigalupi: And they would (jab at you) like that. I'd seen them doing that to people and (they would) scare them to death. And they wouldn't let Ernie get in. He wanted to get in to find us. He knew that we knew a very dear friend by the name of (Martin) Power, and he lived on the top of Russian Hill. It's a high, high hill in San Francisco. And my mother and I, Martin came down to pick us up, to help us up the hill. We had to walk. He helped us walk up to the top, his house was on the top of that hill.

Vercelli: (Were you) by Coit Tower?

Bacigalupi: No, by Telegraph Hill.

Vercelli: Yes, Telegraph Hill. Now where was Russian Hill?

Bacigalupi: Russian Hill was right, you followed Mission, but Broadway goes right up the mountain—

Vercelli: Toward the Bay?





Bacigalupi: —toward the ocean, towards west.

So we were up there. There were very few houses, two or three houses up there. Martin and his folks lived up there. And the Kellys lived up there. I only knew those two people. There were all empty lots there. And everybody was there, from all over the City was up there getting away from the fire. We had a box seat view of the whole town, the whole town was on fire. I remember so well. California Building was the highest one in San Francisco at that time. Now that would be a peanut, it wouldn't be any higher than my thumb. It was the biggest at that time. When the fire got in that, there was fire flying out of all the windows, it was something to see! And all those buildings there was nothing was a big as it is now, but the whole town was just a mess. And we were up on top of Russian Hill, the cinders were flying up, were flying over us, and we were scared to death of them landing on us. But you stayed out all of the time, the only time you went in(side) was to go to the bathroom. You were all scared to go in the house, I think you felt like doing it behind a bush.

[Chuckles]

Bacigalupi: Anyway, the next day Ernie got in San Francisco and he went to find where we lived and they wouldn't left him in. And he knew we would be on the Russian Hill, because they [the Powers] were good friends of our family and Ernie's. And they took care of us, Mom and I, we were the only ones left, Mom and me. And he came up on Russian Hill and there we were. So he hired—this is funny—he hired a garbage wagon, and they were not very big (they only had one horse). This was the shape, watch my hands, they came wide at the top and they came down like this and four sides, just square and one horse.

C. Bacigalupi: Just two wheels?

Bacigalupi: No, four. But they went like this—

Vercelli: Yes, I see what you mean, a big bin.

Bacigalupi: And everything was dumped in this. Well, this wagon was all washed clean and he hired them to come to the top of Russian Hill to pick up my mother and me and whatever we had and this other family. Well this other family, the Kellys and the Powers lived there and all their stuff, of value, was piled in this wagon. And my mother took a spread off of the bed and she put our silver and our pictures, things like that, and she carried it and Martin helped carry it up the hill. I couldn't carry it, I didn't feel too good. Anyway, that's all we saved (from our house).

When we got to the top of the hill, my mother got so frustrated. She said that she wasn't a bit scared, but she was. She opened up a family album and threw away all the pictures and kept the album, without any pictures, to make it lighter. So we didn't have anymore pictures. And she dumped, the few things that she had were silver, she dumped them in the wagon. We didn't have much to put in that wagon. By the time that the Kellys and the Powers put their stuff in the wagon, their



houses didn't burn either, the wagon was full. And we had to walk down that mountain, cross California (Street) and down to Fisherman's Wharf to the boat. We all got in this fisherman's boat and he took us across the Bay.

Vercelli: You had no trouble with the militia?

Bacigalupi: No, we sneaked out. They didn't know, or we would have had trouble, because everybody was suppose to go the Park.

Vercelli: Golden Gate Park.

Bacigalupi: We headed to the Park, but we didn't go. We got out of the City without being found or we would have been in terrible bad trouble.

Vercelli: I'm going to tell you a little story, that will give you a little rest.

My mother arrived in San Francisco—

Bacigalupi: Was she there too at that time?

Vercelli: My mother arrived in San Francisco at 10 o'clock Tuesday night. And the earthquake took place 5 o'clock Wednesday morning, April the 18th. My father had paid my mother's passage over—

Bacigalupi: Oh, she was coming from Italy!

Vercelli: Coming from Italy.

Bacigalupi: What a welcome!

Vercelli: My father had come the year that your dad passed away. My father came from Italy in 1904. He worked for two years, he came on borrowed money. He borrowed the money from someone to come to this country. He paid his passage and he paid for my mother's passage and he had furnished an apartment or flat in North Beach.

Bacigalupi: Were they married in Italy?

Vercelli: Yes, they were married in Italy. They were married in 1902, they had their first born in 1903 and he died as an infant at 9 months old. And they were kind of discouraged. My mother must have been perhaps a liberal maybe an ultra-conservative, I don't know which. She lived in Northern Italy adjacent to a hunting preserve of King Victor Emanuel II. (I visited her birthplace, they made wine there, and I can attest to the fact that we've been in the wine business for 150 years, maybe even longer than that.)

So my mother arrived that night, I don't know what happened, but my mother was separated. She could not say anything but yes or no (in English), and the militia separated them. How they ever got together again—

Bacigalupi: What did they do that for?





- Vercelli: Well, you know how the militia acts. The day after the fire when the militia took over, then you went into lines to get your food. The militia was controlling everything, they didn't say, "Here this is a husband and wife, you go there you go here." Because that bayonet was right there, that you were talking about.
- Bacigalupi: And they couldn't understand very well either.
- Vercelli: So they couldn't ask. So they shoved my mother—
- Bacigalupi: They were horrible! The militia was terrible, they were sticking that bayonet to everybody.
- Vercelli: In subsequent years, my mother found out that she was out in the Potrero Hills, because that wasn't a developed area, rather than go to the Golden Gate Park, where as my wife's folks they went to the Golden Gate Park.
- C. Bacigalupi: Where did your dad end up?
- Bacigalupi: How did they find each other?
- Vercelli: I don't know. Somehow by word of mouth and through friends they were brought together again. But because of the fire my mother really had a tough time of it. She was a young lady, 26 years old, if she were alive now she would be 102 years old, she was born in 1880—
- Bacigalupi: I was born in 1890.
- C. Bacigalupi: That's the year Clara was born, she was ten years older than mama.
- Bacigalupi: She was born in January and I was born in November.
- Vercelli: But as a result of that, my mother had a fear of fire.
- Bacigalupi: I have it too!
- Vercelli: Every time that my mother would hear the fire engine, she would kind of emote. We lived in San Francisco in the Excelsior District, and on our block was Fire Engine Number 38. And every time that the firemen, and I'm talking about the horse-drawn days—I remember every time we would hear the horses go out, we would run up to the firehouse and get into the shoots where they would feed the animals. You know they would get the hay up in the loft and feed the horses down the shoot, they were really slick. And we would go up there and play.
- C. B.: While they were out fighting the fire, otherwise they would kick you out? (Chuckles)
- Vercelli: Yeah. (From the earthquake and her terrible experiences) my mother had developed a phobia, a tremendous fear of fire.



Bacigalupi: So have I.

Vercelli: It is very interesting to hear what you are telling me, because it kind of brings to mind things my mother had told me. About the militia, not being able to get in and out of San Francisco.

Bacigalupi: They were terrible people. But we got out, smuggled. And we got across the Bay and the Kelly family was with us, and the Power family was with us. And we were all in this boat together. When we got across the Bay, then the Kellys had a lovely cottage on the creek in Mill Valley. What's the creek that goes through in Marin? Ignacio [Creek]. She had a house right on the bank, a beautiful spot. And we stayed there all night, all of us, the three families. Ernie and mamma, me and the Martin (Power) family, and the Kelly family owned it, we were all there. Then the next day we got on the train and went to Healdsburg, and from that time on we lived on the ranch.

C. Bacigalupi: How much damage was done to your place in Healdsburg from the earthquake?

Bacigalupi: Nothing.

Clara was there. We had a house, it had four bedrooms and a bath, full, and then a big living room and a small bedroom and a big kitchen. That was the way it was built. There were three porches, on the north had a porch, a big porch, and stairs that went down into the garden, we had a nice garden, the east side had a porch across that went down, where the kitchen on the south side had a porch that went down to the garden.

C. Bacigalupi: The vegetable garden was off to the side?

Bacigalupi: No. South of the house as an orchard. South of that, adjoining, was a garden, vegetables. My father hired a man to do nothing else but take care of the garden, take care of the vegetables, milk the cow and feed the pigs.

C. Bacigalupi: And bake the bread, didn't he?

Bacigalupi: And made the bread, we had a big, big oven from here to the door, and from here to the floor. We had twenty-five men before the fire, and we fed them. My father said a half steer, one a week upon the ranch, they had a cold room, for the men, they were all fed good, they liked working there.

Vercelli: Did you have a bunkhouse on the place?

Bacigalupi: Yes, and they all slept right across from the creek from the winery.

Vercelli: You say the winery was destroyed by fire?

Bacigalupi: I'll tell you how it happened. It was destroyed by fire.

C. Bacigalupi: By arson.





Bacigalupi: My father had a no-good brother. They called him Domy. He had a stroke.

C. Bacigalupi: When he had that stroke, he was quite young.

Bacigalupi: My father used to take care of him, give him money. Because he was no good, he was a gambler, he always had women. In those days, for a man to keep a woman on the side that was a terrible thing! Now a lot of men do it and think nothing of it and will sleep with anybody. But in those days they didn't do it.

But my father took care of him, felt sorry for him. He had plenty of money. And Domy would always come to the depot to meet papa and papa would always shell out the money. He went up every week to see the ranch and Domy was always waiting for money. So when my father died, after the earthquake when we went up on the ranch, Domy had no one to help him. So he wanted to come and stay on the ranch and he would do what he could.

We had a savage dog chained right to the winery. And nobody could get near that winery, because that dog was really savage, he would raise hell with them. So nobody could feed that dog but Domy. And the dog loved him. He always fed and took care of that dog. His chain was long enough so that he could run down to the creek for water. He was a great, big dog, he was like half a calf. He was a vicious dog, nobody could get near, the buildings were safe with him.

Well, we had two great big tanks, enormous tanks, like the wineries do, on the top of the hill. And we had a lot of water, this ranch had a lot of water. And we had a live stream at the beginning of the property and (through to) where it ended. Springs started at the beginning of the property and ended at the end of our property. All year round we had a lot of water. We had a windmill that was pumping all the time, and those two big tanks were filled with water all the time, because of fire. There was no way of getting help with fire in those days and papa always had these tanks filled with water.

[Discussion of location of property]

C. Bacigalupi: Do you know what creek she's talking about Joe? Well, the Starmers live there now. Yes, and they even lived in this house she's speaking of, until it burned on them. But it's that creek that runs down below, between Chiquita Road and Norton Road. It runs—

Bacigalupi: North to South.

C. Bacigalupi: —towards Dry Creek.

Bacigalupi: South, it goes into the creek.

C. Bacigalupi: You've been out Norton Road?

Vercelli: Yes, I've been out Norton Road.



C. Bacigalupi: You know how you go—Norton Road runs in back of Manzanita School—

Vercelli: Yes.

C. Bacigalupi: As you go along, it's up on the bank, down below is a creek that comes out at the base of Miller Hill.

Vercelli: When were you out there last? Have you seen the new development? [Vintage Hills]

C. Bacigalupi: That's more on Simi's place, right by the slaughter house. [Van Der Boon]

But this creek runs between Chiquita Road and Norton Road, along the two hills on either side, it starts up at about Lytton (Springs) Road and runs down through there and crosses Dry Creek Road right at the foot of Miller Hill there, and goes right on down (to Dry Creek).

End of Side One

Continued discussion of the burning of the winery.

Bacigalupi: My mother didn't like him, because he (Domy) was no good. My mother wouldn't have anything to do with him. But she did take him in and she was good to him, he sat at our table and he ate, gave him a place to sleep. Okay. Then he fell in love with my mother, and he wanted to marry my mother. And she wouldn't have anything to do with him. And she got mad about it. My brother came along and saw this thing going on, and he told Domy that he had to pick up his things and get off the ranch. So he kicked him off the ranch, chased him off the ranch to get rid of him because he wanted to marry my mother.

Ernie and me and my mother lived on the Gaddini ranch, we had already bought that, and Clara and Jack then lived on the old ranch were the winery was.

C. Bacigalupi: You know the ranch, the Auradou Ranch?

Vercelli: Yes. Out on Dry Creek.

C. Bacigalupi: That's the ranch she's talking about. Do you know the Pitts' place?

Vercelli: George Pitts.

C. Bacigalupi: No, Harry, George's parents. Do you recall when they lived out on Dry Creek? When mom's family bought that ranch—

Bacigalupi: It was 80 acres.

C. Bacigalupi: And the Pitt's house, the big white house where the Pitts lived, that's the house she's talking about.





- Bacigalupi: That's where we lived. Ernie, mom, and me lived on the Petri people's, we bought it from the Petri's.
- When Ernie kicked off Domy, that's the way we were situated. And Domy was the only one that could get near the winery because the dog wouldn't allow anybody near that. So in the night three buildings, the winery, the fermenting room and the distillery, there were three fires, one fire in each building. So that was set, and it was set by Domy, because no one else could have got near that place, because that dog would have chewed them up. That dog didn't make a sound. And Domy knew where every faucet was, and he opened up every faucet in all those buildings and the tanks didn't have one drop of water.
- C. Bacigalupi: And the wine spigots too.
- Bacigalupi: So the three buildings burned up, the beautiful trees—the place was named after one of the pepperwood trees—Laurel Springs Ranch. Because there was a beautiful spring, that's where we got our ice cold water all of the time.
- Just before this happened, Ernie was only 20-21, he went to New York, just a young man. He sold all the wine that was in this winery. The winery was full. He came back loaded with orders, I don't know how many car loads of new barrels to ship the wine to New York, it was all sold. The whole winery (inventory) was sold.
- Everything burned up, the three buildings at one time, separate fires, you know it was set. And winery was full of wine and the barrels, the shipping tanks broke and wine flew down our creek into Dry Creek and into the Russian River. Our winery filled it! All our wine went down there. We lost everything. The thing was burned to the ground, because we had no water to fight it. This was almost a terrible loss, we only got \$10,000 in insurance—it wouldn't even pay for one building.
- C. Bacigalupi: And all the new cooperage burned up too.
- Bacigalupi: So we almost went broke. Two terrible fires and nothing but \$10,000. We had already bought this other ranch, we owned that, it was clear. So we took that \$10,000 and borrowed more money to build that winery that's on there now. Gaddini put that there.
- C. Bacigalupi: The one where Fredson is now. Who was in that before?
- Vercelli: Healdsburg Wine Company. The fellow was Massoni, and that's what I was going to ask you, Eugenio Massoni moved out—
- Bacigalupi: Gaddini put that in, our family put that in.
- Vercelli: Did you sell it to Massoni?
- Bacigalupi: Yes they sold it and then they sold it to Fredson.
- Vercelli: First, you sold it to Massoni before Prohibition. Eugenio Massoni and I think there was someone else, (Stacy Belli told me about that.) They



had a winery somewhere out behind the Gaddini place, and there's a French name involved someplace, Clem Auradou used to tell me about the French name, Chabeau.

Bacigalupi: Let me tell you about that piece of property. We built it so that it was ready for the next crop of grapes the following harvest. And we only kept it for a short time, maybe two or three years, because Ernie had been so badly injured on his chest from the earthquake that he coughed, coughed, coughed all the time, that he thought he had to get out of there. If he had stayed he would have had a lot of money. He sold his side of the ranch, and they sold the winery, and he went to Lake County and stayed there for six months. And the very boat that he had in San Francisco Bay, he sold it right after the earthquake, he saw it there, it wound up in Lake County and he bought it back. Isn't that funny. And he stayed there for six months until he healed his chest and then he went to Napa County and bought a ranch, and then he went over to Winters and over there (Yolo County).

C. Bacigalupi: Ernie sold that ranch to Harry Pitts.

Bacigalupi: He sold it, but he never got a nickel. He never paid the money, he never paid him anything. He was terrible. He went bankrupt and he had a nice timber holding up north. He lost that, he couldn't pay anyone. Ernie sold that house, his part of the ranch for \$20,000 and he had a hard time getting a nickel out of him.

Vercelli: Well, when Charles said Harry Pitts it didn't dawn on me. I haven't had an occasion to use those names in years.

Bacigalupi: When the Pitts went ka-flooy, the bank took it. And then the Auradous bought it back to adjoin the original ranch.

Vercelli: Was that George Warfields' bank?

Bacigalupi: He worked there, it wasn't his anymore than it was yours. He just worked there. Jean loves to talk about her husband like he owned it, he just worked there.

Vercelli: That was the one where the Bank of America is. Then you had the Mechanic's Bank down on the other corner, and who was the head of that one?

Bacigalupi: Well, there wasn't a lot of banks then Joe.

Vercelli: You just had the two, one on one corner and one on the other.

C. Bacigalupi: Then they sold the old ranch, the place where you started.

Bacigalupi: Everything was burnt on it, except for the barn and the house and the chickens.

Vercelli: Who bought that?





- Bacigalupi: Two Italians bought it, and they divided it amongst themselves. It cost them \$5000, they got all those buildings and—
- C. Bacigalupi: It was 500 acres, about? It was two different pieces.
- Bacigalupi: I don't know. That wasn't the piece across the road that went to the highway.
- C. Bacigalupi: Oh, you didn't sell that at the same time?
- Bacigalupi: No, we sold it at another time, that I can't even remember.
- Vercelli: Can you remember the name of any of the neighbors that you had out there at the Laurel Springs Winery?
- Bacigalupi: Widlands for one, they used to sell their wine to us. My father bought all the grapes around us.
- Vercelli: The Widlands.
- Bacigalupi: An Italian name, they owned the ranch to the north of our place, it was just vineyard. He (my father) bought a lot of grapes.
- C. Bacigalupi: Widlands lived on that road (Norton Road) behind Manzanita School, weren't they across the creek from you?
- Bacigalupi: Yes. They were more west. You ought to take him to where our place was.
- C. Bacigalupi: Because to ferment for the distillery, he had a big cement vat that they put the pomace in. They hosed it down and fermented it. You can still see that there.
- Bacigalupi: That's the only thing left.
- C. Bacigalupi: The Forno (the oven) is still there.
- Bacigalupi: That's the thing Leo used to do for the bread, he had a slab board with a long handle. He would fill that (oven) full of hardwood, got those coals in there, got those bricks—fire bricks—white hot. And he would scrape away all the coals and sweep out all the ashes with limbs that he had tied in a bundle. And then when it was all nice and clean he would take the bread and here was a bread and he would scoop up the bread with the board (and slid them in), he had them all laid in there. He had a big thing, from here to the door—about that deep—
- C. Bacigalupi: Oh, yeah the thing to mix the dough in.
- Bacigalupi: He made the best bread you ever did eat.
- Vercelli: In 1933, when I went to Asti (Italian Swiss Colony). Berelli was the baker, I ate that bread for three years.
- Bacigalupi: Do they have it any more?



- Vercelli: Oh, no. They stopped having it shortly thereafter, 1936 or 37.
- Bacigalupi: Well, that's the kind of bread.
- C. Bacigalupi: Do you know what Leo's last name was, I've heard of him all my life and I've never known his last name.
- Bacigalupi: I don't know.
- C. Bacigalupi: You know he went back to Italy, and Clara used to correspond with him until he died.
- Bacigalupi: Clara was the oldest, when she got to be about 14-15 years old my father had a tutor come in and taught her to read and write Italian. So she knew Italian, she could speak well and she could read and write. then when my brother got that age, he did the same for him. My brother could speak and read and write Italian. By the time I got to be that age, I was too young when he died, so I never got that chance. They never spoke Italian in the house, my father spoke English and my mother couldn't speak Italian, she was born in St. Louis, so I never heard any Italian.
- C. Bacigalupi: Tell him that story. This is a really funny story about how good her Italian was. Tell him that story about you and Leo.
- Bacigalupi: Yes, it's wonderful.
- Leo worked for my father, before my father died. He was like one of the family. I was just a little kid like that when he started to work for my father. And he couldn't speak much English, it was kind of broken. And I couldn't speak Italian. I didn't learn Italian. I learned a little after I got on the ranch. I learned a few swear words. But I never could talk. So when Ernie sold his ranch and winery and everything, he went up to Lake County, he had two little boys only 15 months apart.
- Vercelli: Which were your cousins?
- C. Bacigalupi: Yes, the Gaddini brothers.
- Bacigalupi: As I told you he went to Lake County for the high altitude for his chest.
- (When Ernie moved he needed help) So when Clara and Jack went away, they left me, I was 18, with these two little kids. And I had to be left with Leo, he ate with us.
- C. Bacigalupi: You had the Gaddini boys or did you have Clem and Elizabeth (Auradou)?
- Bacigalupi: I had Clara's children, I had Clement and Elizabeth. Elizabeth was a little baby, maybe six months old, she was still in the crib and couldn't walk or anything. It was always change the diapers, change the diapers. And Clement was only two years older than that, he was such





a good little kid, I had to bath him and take care of him. I was only a kid myself. And I cooked for Leo and took care of the two little children and for myself. And Clara and Jack went with Ernie, to help him with his two little babies, Ernie wasn't too well, to settle them in the house he had rented over there.

Clara said to me, "Now don't stay in the house alone with two little children." It was like out in the mountains in those days, nothing around. And she said, "Ask Leo to sleep here with you in the house, I don't like you to stay alone with two little children." So when he ate his dinner—I can't speak Italian do you speak Italian?

Vercelli: Yes.

Bacigalupi: Just wait till you hear my Italian.

So I said to him, "Leo, Clara detto dormi con mi." (Clara said, "Sleep with me.")

Vercelli: Sleep with me tonight.

Bacigalupi: *Stare a me casa*, meaning to say *stay in the house with me*. But I didn't say that, I said, "Sleep with me."

Vercelli: So you gave him an invitation.

Bacigalupi: Well, the poor guy. He said, "Oh, no, no, oh! (uproar)."

Bacigalupi: And I said, "Clara detto, Clara detto!" And I repeated it again. Well, he got up to get out, and there were steps going down, and I grabbed him by the collar, and I repeated it again, I said, "Clara detto, Clara detto!" and I pulled him and he got away, and he almost fell as he was going down the steps. I followed him! He had to go to his cabin where the winery is, and I took him by the arm and pulled, and he dragged me clear back to his cabin, and I kept saying "Clara detto dormi con mi, Clara detto!" Well you know if he had come and slept with me I would have dropped dead. In those days it was not like it is today, everybody's sleeping with each other, they didn't do that in those days.

Anyway, he was scared to death. He ran in his cabin and I came back. And I thought, what's the matter with that crazy thing, what's the matter with him, he must be stupid. Well, I was the stupid one with my "good" Italian. So when Clara and Jack came back the next day, I said, "What the devil is the matter with Leo, I said, "He must be stupid." I told him to stay here with me in the house me and he got so scared he ran out, I grabbed him by the arm and I almost pulled the arm off the sleeve of his shirt, and he kept on going! And I kept on repeating it. And I told him what you said to say." So she said, what did you say? Well I said, "Dormi con mi, Clara detto dormi con mi." Well, she started to laugh. And I didn't know I had said such an asinine thing, and she just laughed and laughed and laughed and she was so modest. In those days everybody was. "But Clara, you tell him that I made a mistake, I said the wrong thing, but I didn't speak Italian, that I said it



wrong, you tell him.” She said, “I will,” but you know, she never told him. I was so ashamed I could never tell him.

Years after that he went to Italy and she never corrected that. I thought that was mean to have him thinking that I wanted him to sleep with me and he went to Italy and he never knew any different. And he lived to be 90 something, and he died and he never knew that I didn’t mean for him to sleep with me.

Vercelli: So you were a seductress young lady? (laughs)

C. Bacigalupi: But wasn’t that a tribute to him?

Bacigalupi: You’re darn right.

Vercelli: A strong heart. A beautiful young girl, seventeen-eighteen years old.

Bacigalupi: I wonder how many young men would have taken advantage. Well, I tell you if he did, I would have dropped dead.

C. Bacigalupi: A couple of other good stories you could tell him about you and the Corbelli kids when you would go down in the Catena.

Bacigalupi: The Catena—the big winery was adjoining that. But this little Catena was dug into the ground and the big one adjoined onto that. The men, they always allowed the men that worked on the ranch to go in there and have a glass of wine whenever they wanted to. And he had a big jug on the stand, like a table, but built like that. And he had this white wine in there and he had a glass there and a little hose there.

C. Bacigalupi: A siphon hose.

Bacigalupi: I was always into mischief, I was full of hell when I was a kid. Not bad things, I was never bad, but I did silly things. So Corbelli—

C. Bacigalupi: He was the manager.

Bacigalupi: He ran the ranch and his wife cooked for the men, and she had two girls. Gia was smart, very bright. Then she had another one that was simple, she did learn to speak English pretty well. The father used to watch her, there were about 25 men working there and they got a good talking to, not to molest the girl. She was simple and she probably would have gone with a man. I guess he would have killed them. He had them all warned to keep away from her.

I was always full of mischief, I lived in the City and I would come up, I had six weeks of vacation or a month. I didn’t have a very long vacation because it was a private school. They want the money to come in, if you’re not there—bam. But my father would always take me up to the ranch and I had my own bed there and I had these two little girls to play with. The simple one was older than me and the younger one was a little bit younger than me and I was in the middle. And we used to go run around playing. I liked white wine, because it was cold. The wine was cold in that Catena.





C. Bacigalupi: It was down under the ground.

Bacigalupi: It was kind of steep for a kid. They always had the two doors closed and they had a little lock on it, but it wasn't locked, it was just hanging. So I looked at it, it was right by the spring. And we had to go to the spring to get the water, so when we got so close to that, so I said, "Let's go in and get some white wine." (whispers) They would never think of it, their father would kill them! But he wouldn't dare touch me. And I knew it. So I said, "Come on let's go." So we would go down, three little kids. We opened up the lock and opened up the door, and it was dark, the only light you had was just the little door. The jug was right by the door and we could see it. We had to jump on a box to reach it. It was too heavy for us, we couldn't do it, so we put the hose in it and we would all suck, I'd suck awhile, she'd suck awhile and so all three. You can get drunk quicker that way, you get all the fumes, you get everything. Then we got out of there and closed it up as best we could and (I don't know if they ever found out.)

End of Tape





# CHIQUITA RANCH NORTON ROAD AREA



## Index

### Olive Gaddini Bacigalupi

- Arson 7
- Asti (Italian Swiss Colony) 12
- Auradou 1, 11
  - Clara Gaddini 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, 13, 14
  - Clement 1, 10, 13
  - Elizabeth 1, 13
  - John (Jack) 1, 2, 13, 14
- Bank of America 11
- Belli, Stacy 10
- Berelli 12
- Broadway (S. F.) 3
- California St. (S. F.) 4
- Catena 15
- Chinese 2
- Chiquita Road 8, 9
- Coit Tower 3
- Cooperage 10
- Corbelli family 1, 15
  - Gia 15
- Distillery 10, 12
- Dry Creek 8, 9, 10
- Dry Creek Road 9
- Earthquake 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 11
- Emanuel II, Victor 5
- Fisherman's Wharf 3, 4
- Fredson family 10
- Gaddini 10, 13
  - John (father) 2, 7, 8, 12, 13
  - Clara 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 13, 14
  - Domy 8, 9, 10
  - Elizabeth (mother) 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 13
  - Ernest 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14
  - Olive 3, 4, 9, 14, 15
- Gaddini Ranch 9
- Golden Gate Park 5, 6
- Grapes 11, 12
- Healdsburg 2, 7, 11
- Healdsburg Wine Company 10
- Ignacio Creek 7
- Italian 13, 14
- Italy 5
- Kelly family 3, 7
- Lake County 11, 13
- Laurel Springs Ranch 10
- Laurel Springs Winery 12
- Lytton Springs Road 9
- Manzanita School 8, 12
- Marin County 7
- Massoni, Eugenio 10
- Mechanic's Bank 11
- Militia 3, 5
- Mill Valley 7
- Miller Hill 9
- Napa County 11
- New York City 10
- Norton Road 8, 9, 12
- Petri Family 9
- Pitts, Harry 9, 11
- Pitts George 9
- Potrero Hills 6
- Power family 3, 4, 7
  - Martin 3, 4,
- Prohibition 10
- Russian Hill 3, 4
- Russian River 10
- San Francisco 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 15
- Santa Rosa 2, 3
- St. Rose Hotel 2
- Simi Winery 9
- Starmer family 8
- Telegraph Hill 3
- Van Der Boon 9
- Vintage Hills 9
- Warfield, George 11
- Warfield, Jean 11
- Widland family 12
- Wine 10
- Winery 7, 9, 10, 13, 14
- Yolo County 11





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